Joe L. Rivas

Inst: Joe Schicke Ph.D.

Course: ENGL 2311 D01

08 MAY-2025

Recalibrating Educational curricula: Why ENGL 2311 matters?

Abstract:

In an age where knowledge travels faster than wisdom, students leave our institutions armed with technical skill, yet unequipped to speak, write, or lead with clarity. This report issues a call to elevate ENGL 2311: Technical Communication from elective to essential. It identifies a widening chasm between what students know and how they express it, a silence where articulation should stand. Through three criteria: Audience Awareness, Clarity by Design, and Professional Readiness, it examines how ENGL 2311 transforms fragmented expression into focused impact. The evidence is not abstract; it is practical, measurable, and urgent. To bridge intellect and industry, competence and confidence, Texas Tech must mandate the very skill that makes knowledge actionable: communication.

I. Introduction:

This report, prepared for Dr. Ronald Hendrick, Provost and Senior Vice President at Texas Tech University, examines the institutional and pedagogical merits of incorporating ENGL 2311 (Technical Communication) into the core curriculum as a required course for all undergraduate students. It argues that a university-wide mandate would address systemic deficiencies in students’ professional communication competencies, skills increasingly indispensable across all academic disciplines and employment sectors. The report is structured into six sections for   
  
clarity and rigor: The Problem section identifies the communication shortfalls among graduates; the Possible Solution outlines the implementation of ENGL 2311 as a universal requirement; the Evaluation section applies specific academic and workforce-related criteria to measure the effectiveness of this proposal; and the Final Recommendation consolidates the findings to argue for institutional implementation. This document aims to present a data-driven, pedagogically sound justification for enhancing Texas Tech’s curricular framework in alignment with 21st-century workforce demands

II. Problem:

Despite Texas Tech University's commitment to academic excellence and professional readiness, a persistent and measurable gap exists in the technical communication competencies of its graduates. As the contemporary labor market increasingly privileges interdisciplinary collaboration, concise documentation, and audience-tailored messaging, students without formal training in technical writing are at a distinct disadvantage. Under the current curriculum structure, ENGL 2311 remains optional for many majors, thereby excluding a significant portion of students from instruction in rhetorical strategy, multimodal document design, and genre-specific writing conventions critical to professional environments. Employers routinely cite communication proficiency, particularly in writing and information synthesis, as a top hiring criterion, yet anecdotal and empirical evidence suggest that many graduates lack these essential skills. The ability to translate complex disciplinary knowledge into accessible, purpose-driven communication is no longer ancillary; it is central to professional success across industries ranging from engineering and healthcare to public policy and digital media. By allowing technical communication instruction to remain siloed within specific departments, the university risks graduating students who are unprepared for the communicative demands of their respective fields. This deficiency not only impedes individual career progression but also undermines the broader institutional objective of producing graduates who can lead and innovate within their disciplines.  
  
III. Possible Solution:

To remediate the systemic gap in professional communication skills among graduates, it is proposed that ENGL 2311 be designated as a required course for all undergraduate degree programs at Texas Tech University. This strategic curricular adjustment would ensure that every student, irrespective of discipline, receives formalized training in audience-centered writing, multimodal document creation, and collaborative technical problem-solving. As the nature of professional communication grows increasingly complex, with expectations for ethical awareness, intercultural fluency, and digital literacy, ENGL 2311 provides a foundational platform through which students can develop these high-demand competencies. The implementation of this policy would necessitate a revision of core curriculum requirements to integrate ENGL 2311 under the university’s communication or writing-intensive category. Departments could retain flexibility by contextualizing assignment genres to align with disciplinary conventions, such as engineering design reports, business proposals, healthcare documentation, or scientific instructions, thus preserving academic autonomy while standardizing communication training. This solution is grounded not merely in pedagogical theory but in pragmatic industry demand. The ENGL 2311 curriculum emphasizes transferable outcomes, including rhetorical awareness, document design, ethical communication, and project-based teamwork, which mirror real-world expectations across sectors. Moreover, course learning outcomes such as the ability to analyze audience, context, and purpose, and to select appropriate technologies and tools, directly equip students for the collaborative, digital, and multicultural environments in which they will operate post-graduation. Mandating this course would elevate the university’s academic standards, reinforce professional preparedness, and align with Texas Tech’s mission of producing capable, forward-thinking graduates.

IV. Evaluation:

An effective curricular mandate must satisfy specific criteria to be justified institutionally. In evaluating the proposed requirement of ENGL 2311 for all Texas Tech students, three evaluative pillars emerge as indispensable: (1) audience awareness and rhetorical adaptability, (2) clarity and precision in communication, and (3) professional preparedness for interdisciplinary and ethical collaboration. These metrics are not arbitrarily chosen but are derived from the problem previously outlined: students graduate from a leading public research institution lacking the refined communicative capabilities essential for professional efficacy.

1. Audience Awareness and Rhetorical Adaptability

At the heart of technical communication lies the ability to discern the nuances of one’s audience. The ENGL 2311 curriculum systematically trains students to analyze rhetorical situations—considering not only the message but also the social, cultural, and ethical contexts in which it is received. This aligns with long-standing rhetorical theory and Enlightenment ideals: that knowledge must not only be possessed, but communicated with intention and ethical precision. Students engage with varied genres—such as proposals, reports, and procedural documentation—each demanding a distinct tone, purpose, and structure. Rhetorical adaptability is not a luxury in professional life; it is a foundational skill. In fields like cybersecurity, public health, engineering, and law, the ability to adjust messaging to suit the audience can determine success or failure. ENGL 2311 directly addresses this need through iterative drafting, feedback-based revision, and genre-specific practice. By centering communication on audience and context, the course equips students with the intellectual dexterity required in dynamic professional environments.

2. Clarity, Precision, and Design Thinking

In an age overwhelmed by information, clarity is no longer an aesthetic virtue—it is a survival skill. ENGL 2311’s focus on precision and document design cultivates students’ abilities to synthesize complex information and deliver it through accessible, functional formats. From instructions to technical descriptions, students learn that clarity is not achieved through simplification alone, but through principled organization, coherence, and visual hierarchy. These are not abstract competencies. They are directly translatable to industry demands. According to the Guide to Technical Communication, clarity emerges from the intersection of visual literacy, document structure, and economy of language trifecta rigorously emphasized in ENGL 2311. Moreover, this emphasis aligns with the technical writing principles championed by figures such as Joseph M. Williams, who notes that “clarity comes not from rules but from decisions about meaning, audience, and design.” In this sense, clarity becomes a moral commitment: to not confuse, mislead, or obscure the truth.

3. Professional Preparedness and Ethical Collaboration

In contemporary industries, communication is not an individual activity, it is a collaborative, interdisciplinary performance. ENGL 2311 scaffolds this through team-based projects, in which students co-author deliverables and navigate real-world constraints. Such assignments mirror the complexities of cross-functional teams in fields such as healthcare, engineering, and policy analysis. Students must learn to negotiate tone, divide labor, and synthesize heterogeneous inputs—all while adhering to deadlines and ethical standards. The course’s embedded instruction on ethical considerations in technical communication further reinforces professional readiness. Topics such as accessibility, bias, and cross-cultural sensitivity are not afterthoughts but central tenets. As future professionals entrusted with sensitive data, persuasive documents, or public messaging, graduates benefit from ENGL 2311’s attention to both the power and responsibility of language. In this regard, technical communication is not a skill but a civic practice.  
  
V. Final Recommendation:  
 In light of the preceding analysis, it is the firm recommendation of this report that Texas Tech University formally adopt ENGL 2311 as a core requirement for all undergraduate students, irrespective of major or field of study. The evidence, both academic and institutional, points to a clear and urgent truth: communication is no longer a supplementary skill in the workforce; it is a cornerstone of competence, leadership, and innovation. This recommendation is not merely about adding a course to a catalog. It is about cultivating a campus-wide culture of clarity, integrity, and adaptability. Technical communication equips students not just to write, but to think critically, to listen ethically, to collaborate across disciplines, and to communicate across boundaries—be they cultural, professional, or ideological. These are not abstract ideals; they are essential proficiencies in a volatile and interconnected world. Mandating ENGL 2311 institutionalizes the university’s commitment to building a robust, resilient workforce, one capable of translating knowledge into impact, theory into practice, and education into leadership. The course serves as a crucible where rhetorical theory meets real-world application, empowering students to take ownership of their voices and the documents they produce. It teaches not only how to communicate, but how to communicate responsibly, with awareness of audience, purpose, and consequence. Texas Tech has long positioned itself as a forward-thinking institution grounded in public service and academic excellence. In mandating ENGL 2311, the university signals its resolve to prepare graduates not only to enter their professions, but to elevate them. It ensures that the voices of Red Raiders will not echo in uncertainty, but resound in precision, persuasion, and purpose. The long-term yield of this curricular change is a student body equipped not just for careers, but for citizenship—for the task of articulating problems, proposing solutions, and leading with language that builds trust, clarity, and collective action. Thus, in accordance with institutional values and workforce imperatives, this report recommends the immediate and university-wide adoption of ENGL 2311 as a graduation requirement. The future of Texas Tech graduates—and the communities they will serve—depends on it.

VI. References:

Gray, K. (2020). Guide to Technical Communication. Texas Tech University. Lannon, J. M.,

& Gurak, L. J. (2020). Technical Communication (14th ed.). Pearson. Melzer, D. (2014).